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SUBJECT: Serbian Kosovo Position Continues to Harden: Kosovo Weekly
Report (July 16-20, 2007)

Ref: Belgrade 1018

11. (u) This report covers activities related to Kosovo for the
week of July 16.

12. (sbu) Summary: Kosovo was not as much in the public eye as last
week, as there were no visits comparable to A/S Fried and FM
Kouchner to report on. The GoS showed private signs of increasing
rigidity on relations with Kosovo and its supporters.
Significantly, talk of calling presidential elections timed to
coincide with the end of the 120-day negotiating period has
increased. Main news stories included the GoS's and Russia's
rejection of the latest draft UNSCR and the visit of Duma speaker
Grysllov. End summary.

13. (sbu) Most of the Kosovo-related news generated this week was
from private conversations with our counterparts. Energy minister
and DSS Vice President Aleksandar Popovic had a terse conversation
with the Ambassador (ref) in which he hinted Serbia's readiness to
embrace Russia and abandon the EU in order to keep Kosovo, while our
contacts in the European Commission here said that in recent SAA
talks, GoS negotiators said they might not be able to sign
cooperative agreements with neighboring states that recognize Kosovo
independence.

14. (sbu) Meanwhile, as 120 days of further negotiations loom,
there is increasing chatter in the parties about calling
presidential and municipal elections around the end of November -
just as negotiations would be closing. Most of the analytical
community reads this the same way - a blatant use of elections
(again) as a stick to try to beat back a Kosovo decision. This
time, though, Tadic would be in the fore, claiming his political
life is at risk and threatening another Radical Party takeover - and
likely drawing on Kostunica's support of SRS during the coalition
talks to fan the flames of potential instability in an attempt to
get fence-sitters in the EU to call for more delay.

15. (sbu) In public, there was brief attention focused on the
latest draft UNSCR in New York. The GoS preemptively rejected it,
and the Russians quickly followed suit (as portrayed in local
press). Government leaders spent their time on the road, probing
suspected EU weak links to rally support for additional, open-ended
negotiations. Kostunica visited Lisbon, Berlin, and the NATO SYG;
FONMIN Jeremic lobbied OSCE, Madrid, Ljubljana, Lisbon, and NATO
(with the PM); and parliament speaker Dulic visited Ljubljana.

16. (sbu) The visit of Duma speaker Grysllov was also covered, but
did not make a particularly big impression on the media. Our
Russian Embassy contacts said privately that the visit was
specifically geared to support the GoS position on Kosovo and
reiterate opposition to the current UNSCR draft. Presidency
contacts told us the meeting with Tadic was pro forma, and focused
on economic issues (mostly Russian interest in energy sector
investments). Since Grysllov was there in part to show solidarity
with DSS, Tadic and company were not too enthusiastic about being
involved in the meetings. (In other news, Russian MP's beat Serbian

ministers 9-2 in a friendly soccer match.)

¶17. (sbu) Finally, there has been some news about debate over a new Kosovo resolution in the Serbian parliament, designed primarily to reassert the GoS position and to re-authorize a newly constituted negotiating team to continue talks. The DS caucus has already grumbled to us that DS MP's have been completely cut out of the drafting of said resolution, but note that the Radical and Socialists have been extensively consulted. One DS MP echoed KOSMIN Samardzic's quip that the resolution will read like a "moderate Radical" document. The latest speculation is that the resolution will be voted on July 24. The democratic opposition has called for a public parliamentary debate on the resolution, citing the damage the government's position would do to Serbia.

Serbian Government Activities

¶18. (u) Local media reported 7/16 that KOSMIN Samardzic held consultations with parliamentary party caucus leaders July 13 about the Government's draft resolution on Kosovo. He said that the governing parties have reached agreement on the text while the opposition except the LDP and the Alliance of Vojvodina would support the resolution with minor additions. Radical caucus leader Nikolic said that the draft resolution is acceptable and not very different from the SRS proposal, while LDP leader Jovanovic criticized it as ignoring reality and offering no alternative. Samardzic said that the text of the draft resolution will be put before the Parliament on July 24.

¶19. (u) Fonmin Jeremic agreed with NATO SYG de Hoop Scheffer 7/16 that the most important thing was to keep peace and stability in Kosovo. Jeremic said that new talks should be opened at once instead of debates on what resolution on the future negotiations should look like. PM Kostunica told Scheffer that Serbia rejected

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the new draft resolution on Kosovo on the grounds that it was a prelude to the creation of another Albanian state on 15% of Serbian territory.

¶10. (u) Belgrade media reported that PM Kostunica said 7/16 in Lisbon that Serbia rejects any thought of Kosovo independence. He advocated once again the resumption of talks based on UN Res. 1244 underscoring that the new draft resolution is unacceptable for Serbia as it violates the principle of the preservation of territorial integrity. Responding to Kouchner's and A/S Fried's comments from the previous week, Kostunica described the idea of having to choose between Europe and Kosovo as "an indecent offer." Blic wrote that some Portuguese MPs, including the Speaker, "supported Kostunica's stance that Kosovo must not be taken away from Serbia through violation of the international law."

¶11. (u) In a meeting with Slovenian officials 7/17, FONMIN Jeremic said that Serbia expected a higher level of understanding from Slovenia compared to other EU members concerning their common past and the fact that they are more familiar with both the problem area and the delicacy of the relations in this region.

¶12. (u) Kostunica and German chancellor Merkel expressed diametrically opposite positions in Berlin on 7/17 on settling Kosovo status and adopting a new draft resolution on Kosovo in the UNSC. Kostunica said that a new resolution can come at the end of the talks and not at the beginning. He once again called for the resumption of talks based on the "good and valid Resolution 1244," adding that all draft resolutions including this last, fifth and minimalist one prejudice a solution for Kosovo's status.

¶13. (u) Kostunica's DSS and Gryslov's Unified Russian Party signed an agreement on cooperation 7/18. Gryslov said that the agreement is an additional encouragement for interstate cooperation because both parties are parliamentary parties that are guided by the State's interest.

¶14. (u) Belgrade media reported that Jeremic said in Madrid 7/18 that Serbia will be ready to accept participation of Kosovo

Albanians at the elections as well as having official posts in the Government, although this would have a seismic effect on the political scene. Jeremic underscored the necessity for finding a compromise solution for Kosovo status based on European values. However, he stressed that the solution has to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia as well as the legitimate right of the Kosovo Albanians to self-government.

¶15. (u) News agencies reported that Minister of Education Loncar said 7/19 that the Serbian Government strongly rejects any new UNSC resolution but requests continued negotiations based on UNSCR 1244. Loncar added that all six draft UNSC resolutions on Kosovo have been based on Ahtisaari's plan and are essentially a preparation for Kosovo independence, and that the Serbian government was firmly convinced, owing to a joint policy with Russia, it would prevent the adoption of a new UNSC resolution.

¶16. (u) News agencies reported that in Lisbon 7/19, Jeremic said that imposing Kosovo independence outside the UNSC is a guarantee for destabilization of the western Balkans. Jeremic repeated that the Serbian stance was opposite to the U.S. stance on Kosovo, but Serbia wished to work with the U.S. so as to find solution that would guarantee peace in the region.

¶17. (u) After meeting with his Slovenian counterpart in Ljubljana, Serbian Parliament Speaker Dulic said that the Security Council was the right place for resolving the Kosovo issue since the status of Kosovo after 1999 was defined in the UNSC itself. He also said that the latest draft resolution was unacceptable for Serbia since it contained the provision that the Kosovo issue should be resolved in the Contact Group.

Reported U.S. Government Statements

¶18. (u) Local media carried USUN Ambassador Khalilzad's statement 7/19 that the ball was in Russia's court and that it would be decided in the coming days how to close the issue. Khalilzad also assessed that it was time to see whether or not the UNSC would play an important role in the process.

¶19. (u) Local media reported that U/S Burns announced Kosovo will be independent by the end of this year, through the UN decision or some other mechanism. PM Kostunica's Advisor Jankovic reacted, saying that Burn's only argument for Kosovo independence is the fact that the USA promised that to Albanians. Jankovic added that if all legal, political and moral reasons can fall before some precarious, legally unfounded promises made by a major power, then the whole international order should be in fear.

¶20. (u) Belgrade media reported 7/20 that the Secretary said the
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President has clearly stated that the Ahtisaari plan represents an appropriate basis for the resolution of the Kosovo status and that Kosovo should gain independence. They also carried Ambassador Khalilzad's warning that the process of resolving Kosovo status should be continued outside the UNSC if Russia should continue preventing the debate on a new proposal for Kosovo.

Diplomatic Activities

¶21. (u) Spokesperson of European Enlargement Commissioner, Kriztina Nagy, said 7/16 that the European Commission opposes the Kosovo Albanian leaders' threat that they would unilaterally proclaim Kosovo independence. Nagy also said that Brussels is calling on all parties to abstain from unilateral moves, including veto threats, obviously hinting at the Russians.

¶22. (u) On 7/16, local press reported new consultations were held behind closed doors in the UNSC regarding the new U.S.-EU draft. The proposal, press explained, envisages an additional 120 days of negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, but this time excluded the provision that in case of failure, the automatic implementation

of the Ahtisaari plan. However, Russian PermRep Churkin said after consultation that Russia would not support the text formulated even this way and that the duration of the negotiations should not be limited.

¶23. (u) Russian Ambassador to Belgrade Alexander Alexeev said in a 7/18 interview in Nedeljni Telegraf that there is no quid pro quo arrangement in Russia's support for Serbia in the Kosovo issue, that it is purely based on "basic principles of international law".

¶24. (u) During his visit to Belgrade yesterday where he met with DEFMIN Sutanovac, DEFMIN Norbert Darabos of Austria said his country supports the Ahtisaari plan but believes Serbia should be actively involved in the resolution of the issue. He said there should be no linkage of closer ties to the EU with the Kosovo situation.

¶25. (u) British Ambassador to Serbia Wordsworth expressed his belief 7/18 that the new US-EU draft resolution on Kosovo submitted to the UNSC is the last one, and is entering the final stage before voting. He reiterated his belief that Ahtisaari's plan is the best way to solve the Kosovo problem.

¶26. (u) News agencies reported 7/19 that French FonMin Kouchner stated the previous day that he did not expect an agreement to be reached with Russia in the UN on the draft resolution on Kosovo.

¶27. (u) Italian PM Prodi and Slovak PM Fico stated in Bratislava 7/18 that their stands were very close. Prodi in a joint press conference with Fico stated that "when it comes to Kosovo, I confirm our interest in giving a really strong impulse to the region to develop relations with the EU, and to take Ahtisaari's plan on Kosovo as the basis, together with other European countries."

¶28. (u) Tanjug reported 7/20 that the UNSC has postponed consultations on a new U.S.-EU draft resolution on Kosovo for 24 hours to give Russia time to declare its standpoint and to see whether or not the SC would play an important role in determining the future status of Kosovo. Tanjug also reported that Russia is announcing a veto to the proposed resolution, and China has reservations towards it.

¶29. (u) Belgrade electronic media reported on 7/19 Gryslov said that Russia will lodge a veto in the event of any one of the current resolution proposals on the Kosovo status finds itself in the UNSC. Gryslov said that Russia was making efforts to have the negotiations continued and that none of the draft proposals should be submitted for voting before the UNSC.

¶30. (u) News agencies reported 7/19 that Kouchner said negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina could be continued even without the adoption of a new UNSC resolution. He estimated that Russia would not agree to sign the latest draft resolution even with all the concessions.

¶31. (u) B92 reported that Special Envoy Correa of the Portuguese Foreign Ministry in Pristina said that there were other possibilities for the resolution of the Kosovo status, in the event that this issue could not be resolved in the UNSC. Correa informed the Kosovo Albanians that they should not be disappointed if there is no UNSC resolution since the Contact Group has adopted a brief period of negotiations which will enable Belgrade and Pristina to reach a possible agreement and find some solution.

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